

Message Text

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S E C R E T JERUSALEM 0216

NODIS CHEROKEE

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR LEWIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, IS, US, XF

SUBJECT: WEIZMAN'S TRIP TO WASHINGTON

1. ROY ATHERTON AND I MET WITH WEIZMAN THIS EVENING, JANUARY 23, AT HIS REQUEST. I AM REPORTING SEPARATELY ON HIS APPRECIATION OF THE GENERAL NEGOTIATING SITUATION AND POSSIBLE WAYS TO GET IT BACK ON THE TRACK. HIS FIRST CONCERN, HOWEVER, WAS HIS IMPENDING TRIP TO THE UNITED STATES.

2. WEIZMAN HAS COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT HE OUGHT TO POSTPONE HIS TRIP IN ORDER TO GIVE HIGHEST PRIORITY TO A POSSIBLE RETURN TO THE CAIRO MILITARY COMMITTEE. HE BELIEVES THAT IT COULD WELL COMPLICATE MATTERS FURTHER WITH THE EGYPTIANS IF HE COMES TO WASHINGTON AT THIS TIME, AND HE THINKS HE OUGHT TO STAY CLOSE TO JERUSALEM WHILE IMPORTANT DECISIONS ARE BEING DISCUSSED CONCERNING THE NEGOTIATING STRATEGY AND TACTICS PURSUED BY THE ISRAELIS. HE HAS NOT YET DISCUSSED THIS WITH BEGIN, BUT WANTED TO GET MY REACTION AND WASHINGTON'S BEFORE DOING SO.

3. ROY AND I REALIZE THIS IS A MATTER WHICH LIES IN HAROLD BROWN'S COURT SINCE WEIZMAN WILL BE HIS

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OFFICIAL GUEST. BUT THE ISSUE IS PUT TO US IN A DIPLOMATIC RATHER THAN A MILITARY CONTEXT AND WE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF YOU DISCUSSED IT DIRECTLY WITH BROWN.

4. WEIZMAN ASKS IF WE COULD OBTAIN QUICKLY FOR HIM AN ANSWER TO ONE QUESTION: WHETHER DELAYING HIS

VISIT WOULD AFFECT ADVERSELY ANY OF THE ARMS SUPPLY DECISIONS WHICH ARE PENDING. (EVEN IF THAT WERE THE CASE, HE SAID THAT A COUPLE OF MONTHS DELAY IN GETTING F-16'S WAS LESS IMPORTANT IN HIS JUDGMENT THAN KEEPING THE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS FROM GOING IRREVOCABLY OFF THE TRACKS.) WE SAID THAT WE DOUBTED THAT A DELAY WOULD HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT BUT WE WOULD CHECK IMMEDIATELY WITH WASHINGTON AND WOULD TRY TO GET HIM AN ANSWER TOMORROW, JANUARY 24. IN ANSWER TO BY QUESTION, WEIZMAN MADE CLEAR THAT HE WOULD HAVE NO PROBLEM IF PENDING DECISIONS WERE MADE AND ANNOUNCED BEFORE HIS VISIT; HE DOES NOT CARE WHETHER HE "BRINGS BACK THE GOODIES HIMSELF OR NOT." IN FACT, HE SAID HE WOULD REALLY PREFER TO DELINK HIS TRIP WITH HARDWARE DECISIONS AND TO CONCENTRATE ON DISCUSSIONS IN WASHINGTON OF LONG-TERM STRATEGY AND OF THE ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN DIPLOMATIC AND MILITARY NEGOTIATIONS. HE SEEMED PREPARED TO DELAY AS LONG AS MARCH, RECALLING THAT HAROLD BROWN HAD EARLIER SAID HIS SCHEDULE WAS VERY FULL IN FEBRUARY AND ANY DELAY WOULD HAVE TO BE UNTIL MID-MARCH IF IT OCCURRED. HOWEVER, ROY AND I ASSUME THAT YOU COULD PERSUADE BROWN TO JUGGLE HIS SCHEDULE SUFFICIENTLY FOR A VISIT IN MID OR LATE FEBRUARY IF WEIZMAN URGED THAT SORT OF SCHEDULE.

5. BEGIN MIGHT CONCEIVABLY WISH IM TO GO ON SCHEDULE IN ANY EVENT. BUT WEIZMAN IS DETERMINED I THINK TO CONVINCE
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HIM THAT A DELAY WOULD SERVE IMPORTANT DIPLOMATIC AND POLITICAL PURPOSES. IF WE CAN TELL HIM QUICKLY THAT DELAY WOULD NOT AFFECT ADVERSELY WASHINGTON DECISION ON MAJOR SUPPLY ISSUES, THEN I THINK HE WILL DEFINITELY DECIDE TO COME AT A LATER POINT.

6. ROY MAKES THE POINT THAT POSTPONEMENT OF WEIZMAN VISIT WOULD OBVIOUSLY MAKE MANAGEMENT OF MILITARY DECISIONS FOR ISRAEL MORE MANAGEABLE WITH THE ARABS, SINCE IT WOULD LOWER VISIBILITY AND MEDIA ATTENTION TO CONTEXT IN WHICH THOSE DECISIONS ARE TAKEN. WEIZMAN HIMSELF HINTED AT THIS ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATION. NOTING THAT ISRAELI MEDIA WOULD SEEK TO PORTRAY POSTPONEMENT AS RESULT OF US PRESSURE, HE SAID HE WOULD MAKE CLEAR IT WAS HIS IDEA.

7. DEPARTMENT PLEASE REPEAT THIS MESSAGE TO TEL AVIV.
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